

VOLUME VIII

JULY-SEPTEMBER

NUMBERS 7-9

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MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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GLIMPSES OF THE PAST

Earliest Picture of St. Louis

ST. LOUIS  
Jefferson Memorial  
1941

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## Earliest Picture of St. Louis



The first picture of any portion of St. Louis, so far as present records reveal, is engraved on a ten dollar bank note, issued by the Bank of St. Louis in 1817.<sup>1</sup> The engravers who inscribed their names on the note as Leney and Rollison, were William L. Leney and William Rollison of New York City. The directory of that city described the former as "historical engraver," and the latter as "engraver and seal sinker."

The portion of the town shown, excepting the Tower location, comprised what has been officially known as Blocks 7, 8, and 9; 32, 33, and 34, and centers on the present site of the "Old Courthouse" at Fourth Street between Market and Chestnut Streets. The boundaries in recent nomenclature, were: Levee on the east, otherwise known as Front Street, Water Street, and Wharf; Second Street on the west, once known as *Rue de l'Eglise*, and Church Street; Walnut Street on the south, once known as *Rue de la Tour*; and Pine Street on the north, known also as *Rue Quicapou*, and B Street. The center houses were fronted on Main Street, once known as *Rue Royale*, and *Rue Grande*, and in colonial

<sup>1</sup> The Missouri Historical Society is indebted to Mr. Eric P. Newman, of the St. Louis Bar, for calling attention to the bank note which forms the basis of this article; also for the reproductions for use in publication. Mr. Newman is the proud owner of the original bank note.

days the lots extended eastwardly to the rear as far as the "bluffs of the Mississippi." John F. Darby (who came to St. Louis in 1818) in his *Personal Recollections*, says: "A little north of Market Street on the Mississippi, the abrupt bluff began to rise, and so continued up to near the mouth of Rocky Branch, in some places higher and in others lower; in many places rising more than forty feet in a perpendicular, upright wall of solid limestone, and in others hanging over, and forming a sort of cavern at the base. The French called it '*ecores du Mississippi*,' the abrupt wall or precipice of the Mississippi. At the base of this perpendicular cliff was, when the river was low, a large flat rock extending one hundred feet or more from the base of the cliff to the water in the river; and persons could walk from Market Street up to Morgan in front of the cliff on the flat rock."

This engraving shows that by 1817 the bluffs had been cut down at this point leaving a very steep incline from Main Street to the Levee. Soon all of these landmarks will fade away. As the work progresses on the park, which is now being laid out as a memorial to Thomas Jefferson and westward expansion, one after another of the old street lines are blotted out and old landmarks in the way of structures torn down and carried away. The City has vacated the streets, and the street pavings, sidewalks and curbing, are also in process of removal. If the Old Courthouse had not been left as the central monument, strangers, or future generations, would have great difficulty in reconstructing the scenes, or locating the historic sites. This Memorial is, in a sense, the graveyard of old French St. Louis; the confines of which are largely blanketed by the new park.

On the accompanying reproductions of the bank note are shown dwellings and business places of some of the directors of the bank, which was quite appropriate since the directorate was made up of some of the leading men of the town. In addition to their identity as homes of prominent men, several had the added distinction of being the first houses constructed of brick west of the Mississippi River.

The Bank of St. Louis was organized by these prominent men in a patriotic zeal to help the commerce of the town and



provide the people with currency for use as a medium of exchange. A large amount of business was then being transacted in this active American outpost, but currency conditions were very bad. An advertisement in the *Missouri Gazette* of January 11, 1809 illustrates the scarcity of specie, and lack of a satisfactory medium of exchange:

The subscriber has just opened a quantity of bleached country linen, cotton cloth, etc. . . . which he will sell on very low terms. He will take in payment furs, hides, whiskey, country-made sugar and beeswax. St. Louis, Jan. 3, 1809. Dry Goods, groceries, liquors, iron, steel for cash or pork.

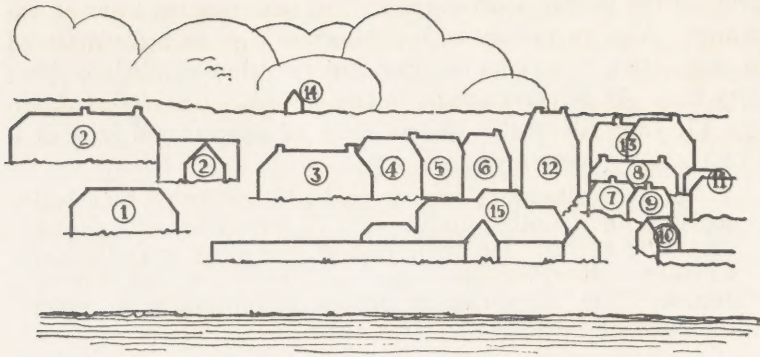
B. Pratte

Another notice appearing in the *Missouri Gazette* of September 19, 1812 was similar in import:

Old Copper, Brass and Pewter. The subscriber will give one bit<sup>2</sup> per lb. for old copper and brass, old stills, kettles, or other worn out copper or brass articles will be taken in payment for debts due the printing office.

The coined money in circulation in the Louisiana territory was not in sufficient quantities to permit its common use as currency. What there was consisted chiefly of gold and silver issues of the Spanish colonial mints in Central and South America. Nevertheless in all contracts for the payment of money the "*livre*" was the basic money of account. This French monetary unit, worth about twenty cents in United States money, was discontinued in France during the French Revolution, but its use as a standard of values in the Louisiana territory continued until about 1820. The Spanish colonial piece of eight *reales* was equivalent to five *livres* and called

<sup>2</sup> The term "bit" was commonly used in the Louisiana territory as an expression for the value of one *real* in Spanish colonial money, or twelve cents and a half in United States money. The expression arose from the practice of making small change by cutting the Spanish colonial silver "pieces of eight" *reales* across their diameters into pie-shaped segments equivalent in silver value either to one or two *reales* each. The smaller of these segments became known as a bit and the larger as a two-bit piece. Contrary to general belief the practice of cutting coins into bits was not at all common in the Louisiana territory as there was an ample proportion of small Spanish colonial silver money in circulation. Much of the cutting up of money was for the purpose of cheating by reducing the proper size of the bits.



- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Market House              | 9. Honey Building          |
| 2. Laclede-Chouteau Building | 10. Labbadie Barn          |
| 3. Pratte House              | 11. Clark Buildings        |
| 4. Smith House               | 12. Gratiot House          |
| 5. Berthold House            | 13. McKnight & Brady Store |
| 6. Lisa House                | 14. Fort San Carlos Tower  |
| 7. Labbadie Store            | 15. Fur Storage Sheds      |
| 8. Labbadie Mansion          |                            |

a *piastre* in French. In calculating values less than one *livre* there were twenty *sols* to the *livre* and two *deniers* to the *sol*.

Obligations in *livres* were payable by established custom in pelts (raw skins with the hair on) at the price of the "receipt of this day in this Post." Furs, lead, tobacco, and whiskey also served as a medium of exchange, but deer skins had become the standard currency, ranging in value from one to two *livres* per pound depending on quality. Deer skins were the least variable in price and were fairly abundant. One dollar in specie was regarded as worth one dollar and twenty-five cents in peltry. The clumsiness attending the physical passing of the furs in exchange soon developed the device by traders of storing the furs in warehouses at St. Louis (a few of which are shown in the foregoing illustration), and using the warehouse receipts as money. In addition the St. Louis fur merchants often assumed banking functions for accommodation of their customers, in the way of making loans, cashing drafts and selling exchange. A trapper would be given a receipt for his season's catch and this receipt would pass current by endorsement. These receipts, or notes, were commonly called



a "Bon" or a "Deer-skin note," and they passed current all along the navigable rivers, and in the commercial marts of the country.

The language on two "bons" which have come to our attention is as follows:

*Bon pour trois Livres six sols—*

*Argent Courant, St. Louis—*

*Le 1me Juin 1803—*

Reg. Loisel

*Bon pour douze piastres argent a raison*

*de deux livres et demi de peaux Chevreuille*

*per piastre a St. Louis le 2 Mars 1805*

*per Fr. Liberge, Sam Solomon<sup>3</sup>*

The Bank of St. Louis was authorized by the legislature of the Territory of Missouri in 1813, on the petition of Auguste Chouteau and a group of other leading men of the territory. The incorporators were: Auguste Chouteau, Manuel Lisa, Bernard Pratte, and Bartholomew Berthold, fur traders; Samuel Hammond, the first civil and military commandant of the District of St. Louis; Robert Simpson, a physician; Thomas Brady, Risdon H. Price, and Christian Wilt, merchants; Rufus Easton, lawyer, first St. Louis postmaster, and delegate to Congress in 1814; Clement B. Penrose, and Jean B. C. Lucas, who had been appointed by President Jefferson commissioners to adjust land claims in Upper Louisiana; and Moses Austin who was engaged in working the mines of southeast Missouri.

The bank charter was dated August 21, 1813, and was to expire August 1, 1838. The capital stock was to be not less than \$75,000 and the properties never to exceed \$450,000, unless by special authority of the legislature. The bank was prohibited from dealing directly, or indirectly, in trading, buying or selling any goods, wares, merchandise, or commodities whatsoever. The bank was however authorized to receive and dispose of bonds, bills, notes, checks or drafts, made payable and

<sup>3</sup> Translation: "Good for three *livres six sols*—current money [deer-skin] St. Louis June 1, 1803. Regis Loisel." "Good for twelve *piastres* in money at the rate of two and a half pounds of deerskin to the *piastre* at St. Louis. March 2, 1805. On behalf of Francois Liberge, Sam Solomon."

negotiable at the bank; and also to receive as security for any loan or discount made by it, any lead, or peltry or furs, or other property, in lieu and in place of any endorsers to the bills, notes or obligations. The bank was not authorized to incur any debts in excess of double the amount of the capital stock paid in. The officers of the bank, who had little or no experience in banking, were, Samuel Hammond, President, and John B. N. Smith, cashier. The first directors were: Samuel Hammond, William Rector, Bernard Pratte, Risdon H. Price,



Moses Austin, Col. Eli B. Clemson, Theodore Hunt, Justus Post, Robert Simpson, Charles W. Hunter, Walter Wilkinson, Theophilus W. Smith, and Elias Bates.

On account of conditions attending the War of 1812, subscriptions to the stock of the Bank were slow coming in. The bank commenced business in 1816 but the competition of other banking enterprises proved embarrassing, and the bank finally closed during the ensuing panic, on July 24, 1819. One dividend of eight per cent was paid to the stockholders on July 15, 1817. However, the stockholders ultimately suffered heavy losses, being liable under the law, for double indemnity on the amount of their stock subscriptions. The bank had advanced large sums for real estate speculation and issued more notes than it could safely carry.<sup>4</sup> Most the notes bore dates

<sup>4</sup> Acts passed by the General Assembly of the Territory of Missouri, St. Louis, 1813; Missouri Gazette, 1809-1819.



of either February, March or April of 1817, and were in denominations of twenty-five cents and one, two, three, five, ten and twenty dollars. The five dollar note bore an engraving of a trapped beaver; the twenty dollar had a picture of a shot tower, lead smelter and buildings in Herculaneum, a town in which Moses Austin, Samuel Hammond, and Elias Bates were financially interested. The ten dollar note as previously illustrated bore a "Partial View of St. Louis."

## DIAGRAM AND DESCRIPTION OF BUILDINGS

## MARKET HOUSE

Beginning at the left of the picture, in the foreground, may be seen the Market House, situated on the Levee, in block 7. In the early days of the village this block was set apart as the "*Place d'Armes*," or "*Place Publique*." As the name indicates, it was used for public purposes of all kinds, and after the arrival of the Spanish troops (December, 1768) it served for military drill and parade. The "*Place Publique*" covered the block recently bounded by Walnut, Market, Levee, and Main Streets. For a few years only, Laclede had a warehouse on part of this square. After the coming of the Spanish Governors, grants to the south half of the block were given to Benito Vasquez and Bonaventure Collell; Laclede's warehouse was removed to the block west, and the balance reserved for public use.

In 1811, two years after the incorporation of the town, the Trustees of St. Louis undertook the building of this Market House. According to the minutes of their meetings, the building was to be as follows: 48 feet long by 25 feet wide, from pillar to pillar; to consist of 5 pillars on each side of well-hewn stone and built with good cement; said pillars to be 10 feet apart and 12 feet high, a plate of timber 10 by 12 inches thick and 56 feet in length to be laid on the pillars so as to pass the pillars four feet at each end, the rafters of the roof to be laid on the plate with four cross beams, 10 inches square, and a sufficient number of slats of the common dimension; the roof to be well shingled. Two weeks later the Trustees moved that as an added feature: "The said Market House be paved with stone laid flat." The building was to be located on the northwest part of the block, "55 feet south of Capt. Bernard Pratte's building, and 38 feet from a line with Pratte's lower or north and south wall. It might be of interest to mention here that prior to the first survey of the Town by Joseph C. Brown, United States Deputy Surveyor, every person who enclosed his lot, or built his house, fixed its location as best he could from the surroundings; usually taking Laclede's Block 34, as the initial point. As some of the early



improvements were made a long distance from this point, and the place thickly covered with timber, it was quite impossible to be very accurate.

In March, 1811, the Town Trustees decided to abandon their first plan, and to have the columns or piers to the Market House, built of brick instead of stone. This decision is notable in the fact that it marks the early use of brick as a building material in St. Louis. The brick used was probably made by Samuel Bridge, who had advertised in the *Missouri Gazette*, October 10, 1811, that he had for sale "a kiln of brick." On June 24, 1811, the Trustees authorized the contractors to proceed with the construction of the building. The date of the completion of the Market House is not definitely established, although regulations for the new Market House were included in a town ordinance of August 26, 1812. When completed the building consisted of three rows of six brick piers supporting a simple wooden gable roof with a generous overhang. Between the piers at the sides (more or less paralleling Market Street) and at the east end, there were, all told, twelve victual stalls; the west end being left open to allow for easy access from Main Street. To the north and south of the building and ten feet from it, a space was reserved for the farmers' carts and wagons, from which were sold vegetables and other produce. The carts were backed up toward the building and were required by ordinance to be kept three feet apart from each other. Similar rows of carts flanked the approach from Main Street.<sup>5</sup>

The old Market served the town for seventeen years. It must have proved very useful to the community, whose people found it important to replace it with another of the same kind, but much larger and more commodious. In the latter building space was arranged for the Town Hall. That the old Market did not take hold upon the people at once is perhaps shown by the following editorial in the *Missouri Gazette* of March 23, 1816:

The St. Louis market has for some time sustained an extravagant advance in the necessaries of life, and de-

<sup>5</sup> Frederic L. Billon, *Annals of St. Louis, 1804-1821*; Minutes of the Trustees of the town of St. Louis; Billon's Notes, manuscript; G. Viator Davis, "Notes on Block Seven." Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.

mand the notice of citizens generally. Poor Beef is sold at from 6 to 8 cents per lb.—Fresh Pork will readily bring 5 and 6 cents per lb.—Lard  $12\frac{1}{2}$  cents per lb.—Butter rates at 20 and 25.—Eggs at  $12\frac{1}{2}$  cents per dozen. Superfine flour will command \$10 per barrel.—Horsemill flour will sell at \$3.50 per cwt. lbs. Corn meal 50 cents per bushel.

A market house was built at considerable expense, and hopes were entertained that it would be a mutual advantage as well to the citizen as the farmer. The latter yet wanders about our streets with his produce, seeking purchasers, and by a mistaken policy the Market House is almost entirely forsaken.

We would beg leave to remind the trustees of this borough that the evils complained of can be remedied. Instead of demanding enormous rents for the stalls, they should be given rent free to the farmers who may attend the market, reserving the four stalls facing Front street, for the butchers, who may have them at moderate rates, and inflicting severe penalties on butchers vending meat in their slaughter-houses, and on farmers hawking produce through the streets before 10 O'clock A. M.

An ordinance was passed and published, prohibiting butchers and others slaughtering within the most populous parts of the town or selling meat in their slaughter-houses; the subsequent conduct of the butchers evinced a sovereign contempt for the law. They not only sold their beef, &c. in their slaughter-houses, but in violation of the Ordinance built a new one in the centre of the town, where the stench became so intolerable as to induce a respectable physician to remark that should an epidemic burst forth, it might be traced to that seat of putridity.

#### LACLEDE-CHOUTEAU HOUSE

Back of the Market House, as shown in the illustration, may be seen the Laclede-Chouteau house. It was built by Pierre Laclede Ligest for his residence, but was also intended to facilitate his management of the business of the firm of Maxent, Laclede and Company. This firm had its headquarters in New Orleans but had received a license from the French governor of Louisiana for the exclusive right to trade with the Indians on the Missouri. Laclede transacted his business in this building from 1764 until the time of his death in the year 1778.



This was a very large house for the time, and notably so for being located in the wilderness. He was a bachelor, and while he housed Madame Rene Auguste Chouteau and her family, it is probable that he also planned the building for use of the government. Louis St. Ange de Bellerive, the last French governor of the Illinois Country, also a bachelor, lived there with Laclede, and thereafter it was occupied by the Spanish governors, Piernas, Cruzat, and De Leyba. The latter and his wife died in this house in the years 1780 and 1779, respectively. Cruzat afterwards returned to the house during his second regime as successor to De Leyba.

The dimensions of this house were: Sixty French feet<sup>6</sup> on the front, which faced the east and what was afterwards known as Main Street, and twenty-four feet in depth, running westwardly along what was later known as Market Street. The principal floor was divided off into five rooms; the central one of which was twenty-four French feet square and four smaller ones ranged along each side. For nearly twenty years this central room was the Government Hall, while the families of the respective governors occupied the other rooms, and the soldiers occupied the quarters on the ground floor or basement. This basement extended about ten feet above the level of the ground and was divided in the same fashion as the upper part of the house. The approaches to the main floor of the house were by outside steps to galleries in the front and rear. There was a very high garret, which was approached by narrow flights of stairs at two of the inside corners.

This original house, with several commodious outbuildings used in connection therewith, was erected toward the center of the block belonging to Laclede, three hundred feet square, enclosed with a fence of stakes, in what was afterwards city block 34. The walls and also the pillars of the lower porch were built of stone, laid in mortar and thickly plastered with lime. The flooring in the upper portion was built of walnut formerly used at Fort Chartres, from whence it was removed in anticipation of English occupation of that country. Laclede

<sup>6</sup> A French foot was approximately thirteen inches.

was busily engaged at the time in removing his goods from Fort Chartres and trusted young Auguste Chouteau to carry out the exact plans he had made for the house, as well as for the village, of which he intended it to be the center. A large part of the planks were hewn out of solid timbers. Chouteau stated in his journal, that in the course of building there arrived among them the entire tribe of Indians known as the Missouris—women, children, and about one hundred and fifty warriors. They were a heavy burden, especially in respect to their continual demands for provisions and their thefts of tools. His own party only numbered about thirty and the Indians told him that they wished to form a village around Laclede's proposed house. Chouteau was so disturbed that he sent for Laclede, who returned from Fort Chartres and held a council with the Indians. The Indians remained fifteen days longer, during which time Chouteau got the cellar of the house dug, largely by the women and children. He paid them with vermilion, awls and verdigris. They used hoes in digging and carried the dirt away in platters and baskets, which they bore upon their heads.

The larger requirements of the government probably crowded Laclede and after four years he moved his place of residence. In 1766 he began the erection of another stone house to the north, in block 33, which fronted to the east on what was since known as Main Street, and measured fifty feet front by thirty-four feet in depth. It was much the same design as the one he first built. This house he gave to Madame Marie Therese Bourgeois Chouteau, for life, the remainder to her children: Auguste, Pierre, Pelagie, Marie Louise, and Victoire. The deed stated that the gift was in consideration of the faithful services which he had received from Sieur Auguste Chouteau during the several years he had worked for him as his clerk. This latter house was completed in 1768 and both Laclede and St. Ange moved into it with Madame Chouteau and her family.

As the years passed it was discovered that on account of the leniency of Laclede in the affairs of the firm, a large amount of doubtful and worthless paper had been suffered to accumulate, forming a considerable portion of the assets of Maxent,



Laclede and Company. In order to secure his senior partner, Maxent, against loss, Laclede executed on December 13, 1777, a deed of relinquishment of his interest in the square of land and the buildings in block 34. On his way up the Mississippi from New Orleans, near the mouth of the Arkansas, on June 20, 1778, Laclede died. After his death the old house began to deteriorate. Maxent proved a poor manager for the property, which he had retained for over ten years, and during which time it continued to be occupied by the Spanish governor and his soldiers. For lack of repairs it came to such a point of disrepair that it was referred to as a "stone house falling to ruin with a rotten roof." Maxent authorized Gabriel Cerre to dispose of the property either at public or private sale, and the same was transferred to Auguste Chouteau, who bought it at public sale on January 6, 1789.

Auguste Chouteau proceeded immediately to remodel and practically rebuild the house. He first enclosed the entire lot with a high stone wall, which was pierced at intervals with small openings to accommodate muskets in case of hostile attacks from the Indians. A stout gate opened directly in front of the main entrance to the house. An additional story, amply protected from the sun on all sides by a broad veranda, covered with a sloping roof, was added, and the house became a very handsome residence of the French colonial type. The verandas at the first floor were afterwards enclosed at both ends in order to afford additional room. The basement solidly built in the durable and painstaking fashion of the time, was used for the storage of household supplies; a large amount of which were necessary, as most of them could be procured but twice a year when the boats returned from New Orleans. A large attic extended over the second story, making the house more commodious and attractive in appearance. Not far from the house, Chouteau sunk the first well in St. Louis.

The unusual beauty of this location, with its fruit and forest trees, commanding a full view of the River, was noted by travelers who came to St. Louis. Here, dressed in his quaint and patriarchial costume of knee breeches and broad silver buckles on his shoes, with his hair *en queue*, Chouteau and his family resided for over forty years, until his death

February 24, 1829. His widow, Madame Therese Chouteau, daughter of Gabriel Cerre, continued to occupy the house for several years. It was wrecked in October, 1841, to make way for commercial buildings. Mrs. Chouteau died in August, 1842.<sup>7</sup>

#### BERNARD PRATTE

Opposite the Market House to the north will be seen in city block 8, the house of Bernard Pratte, being later described as the northeast corner of Market and Main Streets. It was built by Louis Robert about 1782, of upright posts on a stone foundation, fifty by forty-five French feet in dimension, two stories high, with a gallery all around and fronting on Main Street. After changing owners several times it was purchased by Bernard Pratte in 1797 for sixteen hundred *livres* from the widow of Pierre Alexis Marie. The lower floor was used as a store, where dry goods, groceries, liquors, iron, steel, etc., were sold. The upper floor contained the living quarters of the Pratte family. The lot was one hundred and twenty by one hundred and fifty French feet, and had the usual detached kitchen, garden and fruit trees fenced in. There was also a small warehouse facing the River. Pratte remodeled his house and added a brick building in 1817.

Bernard Pratte, merchant and fur trader, was the son of Jean B. and Marie Anne (Lalumandiere) Pratte. He was born in Ste. Genevieve June 11, 1771, and came early to St. Louis, where he embarked in business in 1793. He began trading on the Mississippi River between St. Louis and New Orleans, establishing stores at St. Louis and Ste. Genevieve. Pratte regularly traveled to New Orleans and the East for supplies of merchandise for his store and trade. For years he was prominent in the fur trade. In 1816 he became one of the partners in the firm of Cabanne and Company, which later changed its name to Berthold, Chouteau and Pratte. In 1823 this company was reorganized as Bernard Pratte and Com-

<sup>7</sup> "Journal of the Founding of St. Louis," in *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, 3; 352-356; Billon's Notes, ms.; John Thomas Scharf, *History of Saint Louis City and County*, 1; 139; St. Louis Archives, manuscripts in Missouri Historical Society; "Laclede-Chouteau House," ms. sketch written by Pierre Chouteau, who died in 1910; Billon, *Annals of St. Louis, 1764-1804*.



pany, when they made a contract with the American Fur Company for the exclusive right to purchase their furs. In 1827 the firm secured an interest in the Western Department of the American Fur Company. Three years later General Pratte retired from active connection with the fur trade, and died in St. Louis April 1, 1836.

General Pratte was a man of ability and held positions of trust as member of the first grand jury, 1804; territorial judge, 1807; treasurer of the District of St. Louis; member of the constitutional convention, 1820; United States receiver of public monies, 1825. He was one of the three citizens who in 1833 financed the movement to save the harbor of St. Louis from sand bars. He was also conspicuous in military affairs of the community, serving as captain of a militia company called out in 1807 to resist anticipated attack by the Osage Indians. In 1809 he was sent with reinforcements to Fort Madison, in the present State of Iowa, to repel an attack on the northern frontier. His family and intimate friends always spoke of him as "*Mon General*." On May 12, 1794, he married Emelie Sauveur, daughter of Silvestre and Pelagie (Chouteau) Labbadie. They had seven children. One of their daughters, Emelie, married Ramsay Crooks, who became president of the American Fur Company in 1834, and their son, Bernard Pratte, Jr. served as mayor of St. Louis in 1844 and 1845.<sup>8</sup>

#### WILLIAM SMITH

Next to the building of Bernard Pratte, to the north in block 8, fronting on Main Street, is shown the two-story dwelling and store of William Smith. This house was built in 1812 and was the second brick building erected in the town of St. Louis. Smith occupied it until his death in 1817. Some years later it was used by Sublette and Campbell, one of the leading fur trading firms in the West.

William Smith was born in Culpepper County, Virginia, in 1772. While still a youth he moved to Lexington, Kentucky, and there married Eliza Brady. He came to St. Louis with his family in 1810, purchasing from Bernard Pratte, Sr., the

<sup>8</sup> St. Louis Archives; Billon's Notes; St. Louis Old Cathedral Records; *Missouri Gazette* December 27, 1817.

ground upon which he erected his store and residence. Soon after arriving in St. Louis he joined the mercantile company of Smith, Von Phul & Co. The members dissolved partnership in September of 1812, but Smith and Von Phul continued business. At the time of Smith's death he was associated with James Clemens, Jr. Being a successful business man and an active politician he soon attained prominence and influence in the town. The day following the death of Charles Lucas in his duel with Thomas H. Benton, a number of people were gathered in front of Kibby's Washington Hall on the southwest corner of Main and Pine Streets discussing the unfortunate affair. An altercation arose between Smith and William Tharp. Smith struck Tharp, whereupon Tharp drew his pistol and killed Smith. This occurred September 28, 1817. The *Missouri Gazette*, October 4, 1817 carried this notice: "William Smith died on Sunday last, a merchant of this place. As we deem it not only a contempt of court, but an indecorous procedure, and tending to bias public opinion to give a detailed statement of the unfortunate affray between the deceased and Mr. Tharp, we shall only state that Mr. Smith was a tender husband and an affectionate father." The Benton-Lucas duel arose from political antagonism and as the *Gazette* was an anti-Benton paper, the following letter to the editor on the Smith shooting, and favorable to Tharp may be of interest:

Mr. Charless.

A friend of humanity would put the following questions to the proper authority. From whence is derived the authority to load a prisoner with irons before conviction and condemnation? Was the prisoner now in the county jail of St. Louis committed for safe keeping or for punishment? Where is the necessity of calling out the militia to guard a prisoner already loaded with irons and in a stone prison? Is the county jail not sufficiently strong to prevent the escape of a prisoner ironed hands and feet, without embarrassing the militia of St. Louis with such unpleasant duty? If it is not, why not build a stronger one? . .

*A Militia Man*

After the trial of Tharp the *Gazette* announced that "The account of the trial of William Tharp for the shooting of



William Smith came too late for this number. We have only to state that he has been acquitted of the charge of murder, as laid in the indictment."

Mr. Smith left four sons and one daughter, besides his widow. On December 29, 1827 she married Lewis E. Hempstead, grandson of Stephen Hempstead, a soldier of the American Revolution, who also came to St. Louis in the early days.<sup>9</sup>

### BARTHOLOMEW BERTHOLD

The next house shown in the picture, toward the right, is that of Bartholomew Berthold, a two-story dwelling and store. This was the first brick building west of the Mississippi and was built for Berthold by John Lee in 1812. In 1821 the store on the first floor was occupied by Berthold and Chouteau, which firm later became the Western Department of the American Fur Company. Due east from the Berthold building, and close to the Levee, may be seen two small buildings. These may have served first as barns and outbuildings, but were later used as warehouses. This property originally was granted by the Spanish Government to Francois Bissonnet.

Bartholomew Berthold was the son of Alexander and Marie Magdeline (Beltrami) Berthold, born near the city of Trent in the Italian Tyrol, in 1780. When eighteen years of age he came to the United States, remaining for a time in Philadelphia, and then went to Baltimore, Maryland, where he lived for some years. In 1809 he became associated with Rene Paul, and with a stock of goods they came to St. Louis, where they established themselves in business. Mr. Berthold married on January 10, 1811, Pelagie, daughter of Pierre Chouteau, Senior. On June 6, 1812, the firm of Berthold and Paul was dissolved, and Mr. Berthold went into partnership with his brother-in-law, Pierre Chouteau, Jr. After going east to purchase a stock of merchandise they opened their store on May 1, 1813 under the name of Berthold and Chouteau. Mr. Berthold died April 20, 1831, leaving his wife and seven children.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Billon, *Annals of St. Louis, 1804-1821*, p. 246; *Missouri Gazette*, October 4, 11, 1817, and September 11, 1818.

<sup>10</sup> Christian Wilt Letter book, 1812-1815, ms.; Billon's Notes; St. Louis Archives.

## MANUEL LISA

On the southeast corner of recent Main and Chestnut Streets to the north is a two-story dwelling and store built in 1813 by Manuel Lisa. This was the fourth brick building erected in St. Louis. While it was occupied by Lisa and his wife, Polly Charles, and was known as the Lisa house, the store was occupied and used for mercantile business by P. J. and J. G. Lindell. As the Lindell brothers were bachelors they probably had quarters with the Lisa family. Paxton's directory for 1821 lists them as living at No. 21 N. Main. Mrs. Mary Lisa, widow of Manuel Lisa, was also living at that address. Polly (Charles) Lisa died February 10, 1818, and Manuel Lisa married Mrs. Mary Keeney, widow of John Keeney, and daughter of Stephen Hempstead, August 5, 1818.

The original owner of this site was Francois Bissonnet, who received a grant from St. Ange in May, 1766, of one hundred and twenty by one hundred and fifty French Feet. Bissonnet erected on the southern part of the lot a house of posts on a stone foundation, forty-five by twenty feet. His widow sold the property in 1798 to Jean Baptiste Truteau (frequently spelled Trudeau). For many years the latter conducted a school for boys in the building. In 1799 Truteau was granted by Governor DeLassus ninety-six feet on the River by seventy-two feet in depth "to work the part of the quarry contained within the said space exclusively." It was from Truteau that Lisa acquired the property on which he built his residence; the sale including also twenty-six feet to the rear, fronting on the Levee, as well as ninety-six feet on Main Street.

Manuel Lisa was born in Lower Louisiana about 1776, and was the son of Cristobal de Lisa, a native of Spain, and Marie Ignacie (Rodriguez) de Lisa, of St. Augustine, Florida. Lisa engaged in the Indian trade at an early age and made several voyages from New Orleans to the Wabash country. He settled in St. Louis in 1799 and a few years later obtained a monopoly from the Spanish Government to trade with the Osage Indians. His first trading voyage to the Upper Missouri River country was in 1807, and from that time until his death at Sulphur Springs, below St. Louis, August 12, 1820, he was the recognized leader in the fur trade. He had great control



over the Indians and rendered important service to the United States Government during the War of 1812. Lisa was one of the partners in the original St. Louis Missouri Fur Company, the first enterprise of its kind. Formally organized through articles of co-partnership dated March 7, 1809, its purposes were to launch and conduct hunting and trading expeditions on the Upper Missouri River and tributaries for a term of three years; a subordinate enterprise was the return of Shehaka and his family to their village on the Upper Missouri. Shehaka was the Mandan chief whom Lewis and Clark persuaded to join them on their return to Washington to visit President Jefferson. The Government paid the Company \$10,000 for the safe conduct home of these guests of the nation on this last part of the journey. The partners in the fur trading company were Benjamin Wilkinson, Pierre Chouteau, Auguste P. Chouteau, Reuben Lewis (brother of Meriwether Lewis), William Clark, Silvestre Labbadie, Jr., Pierre Menard, William Morrison, Andrew Henry, and Manuel Lisa. The first expedition left St. Louis in June, 1809 with 172 men and nine barges loaded with goods worth \$4269 including \$165 worth of whiskey. The main party reached the Big Horn about November 1, 1809. A profitable trading and trapping campaign ensued. The company was reorganized January 14, 1812 with surviving partners, except Morrison. The capital was fixed at \$50,000 and the time limitation 1818. William Clark was made president and Manuel Lisa and Silvestre Labbadie directors. An expedition with two barges leaving in May 1812, yielded a profit of \$9000. After six months' liquidation, this company was dissolved January 17, 1814. Lisa then formed a partnership with Theodore Hunt in July, 1814, under the name of Missouri Fur Company. This company expired by limitation in June, 1817, after having brought in a cargo of furs valued at \$35,000. For about a year Lisa associated himself with Cabanne and Company, and in April, 1819, he organized another Missouri Fur Company, which did not include any of his earlier French associates.<sup>11</sup> About this time, or possibly a year or two previous, Lisa built a stone warehouse on the

<sup>11</sup> Walter B. Douglas, "Manuel Lisa," in *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, 3; 233.

property acquired from Truteau at Levee and Chestnut Street. This building known as the "Old Rock House" is now being restored as part of the Riverfront project of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial.

### SILVESTRE LABBADIE BUILDINGS

To the north of the Lisa building is shown, at what was afterwards known as the northeast corner of Main and Chestnut Streets, in city block 9, the stone store and warehouse of Silvestre Labbadie. It was thirty-two by thirty-six feet and was built about 1785.

Next, to the north of the store, is shown the mansion house of Silvestre Labbadie. The site of these properties was originally granted to Louis Beor in May, 1768. It was acquired by Labbadie March 28, 1778, in a deed from Dr. Joseph Conand, which describes the property as follows: "Lot of ground one hundred and twenty by one hundred and fifty French feet, bounded [north] by land of Marie; by a cross street [on the south] which runs to the Mississippi, on one side of which is land of Bissonnet; Main Street on the west, and in the rear by the Mississippi. It contains a house of stone, fifty by twenty-five feet, floored above and below, covered with shingles, suitable doors and windows; a small house, kitchen and cabin of posts in the ground, not boarded (meaning no floor or ceiling) for the negroes; said little house furnished with all its furniture, reserving only for the seller the mattresses, trunks and other articles, which they are taking to New Orleans; also a barn and garden." The consideration was seventy-five hundred pounds of deer skins. These houses were said to have been built by Jean Papin, master mason, in 1770, and at the time of the engraving of the foregoing banknote, were occupied by Silvestre Labbadie, Jr., and his sisters.

Silvestre Labbadie, Sr. was the son of Dominick and Anne (Berlac) Labbadie, and was born in Vigonia, France, about 1741. His name is first found in the Archives in 1769, and in 1773, he was trading with the Indians. He married, July 30, 1776, Pelagie, daughter of Marie Therese Bourgeois Chouteau. A successful merchant for several years, he accumulated



a handsome fortune. Soon after his marriage he entered into partnership with his brother-in-law, Joseph M. Papin, in the commission business. He died in St. Louis, June 19, 1794. In his will he appointed Bernard Pratte, his son-in-law, and Auguste Chouteau, his brother-in-law, to make an inventory and division of his property; his widow was executrix of his estate. He left five minor children: Silvestre, who was born February 19, 1779, and married, June 25, 1807, Victoire, daughter of Charles Gratiot; Emelie, Pelagie, Sophie, and Marie Antoinette Labbadie. Mrs. Silvestre Labbadie died in St. Louis, June 6, 1812.

Toward the River and between the stone store and the Labbadie mansion, was a small stone building twenty-five feet square, afterwards occupied by John W. Honey. Soon after the Louisiana Purchase, Honey came to St. Louis from Virginia, to join his stepbrother, Thomas F. Riddick, and was employed by him as a clerk in the land office. On September 22, 1810, he married Marie Antoinette, the youngest daughter of Silvestre Labbadie. The marriage was an unhappy one and after five years they were divorced. Mr. Honey again married on March 1, 1817, at Herculanum, Missouri, Clarissa, daughter of Eliza Bates. He resided at Herculanum until his death in 1832. His daughter by the second marriage became the wife of Governor Thomas C. Fletcher of Missouri. When Honey was only nineteen years old he was appointed by Governor Meriwether Lewis, clerk of the Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions of the District of Arkansas. At the same time he held the offices of treasurer, recorder, and judge of the Probate Court of the same District. These offices he held but a year for he returned to St. Louis in 1809. In May, 1811, he was appointed coroner of St. Louis. Notwithstanding his official duties he had time to engage in the lead and shot business.<sup>12</sup>

### BUILDINGS OF WILLIAM CLARK

North of the Labbadie buildings are those of William Clark on land originally granted to Rene Kiersereau in city block 9. In 1766 he built a dwelling house of posts thirty by twenty-

<sup>12</sup> St. Louis Archives; Old Cathedral Marriages, Baptisms, and Burials; Billon's Notes; Wilt's Letter book; Billon, *Annals of St. Louis*.

five feet, enclosed with a fence, on the southeast corner of what was afterwards known as Main and Pine Streets. After several transfers it fell into the hands of Benito Vasquez, who bought it in 1780 for sixty-two hundred pounds of peltries. At that time the lot, one hundred and fifty by one hundred and twenty feet, had on it three stone buildings, forty by twenty-five feet, barn, etc., in addition to the house of posts. Vasquez transferred this property to Alexander McNair, who on January 11, 1811, sold it to William Clark, of Lewis and Clark fame. In the Eleanor Glasgow Voorhis Collection of Clark manuscripts, belonging to the Society, is the plan of Gen. Clark's residence and Indian Agency in St. Louis, as drawn by him. It shows, fronting the east line of Main Street, his Council House, office, and dram shop; next to the north the garden, then his dwelling, containing parlor, bed-room, entry hall and chamber, with porches front and rear. Facing Pine Street, and separated from the house, was the kitchen and a shed. In the rear of these was a garden. Some distance from the shed eastward, were also the stable and stable lot, blacksmith and gunsmith shops; then came a stone wall. On Front Street, or Levee, was the Factory House, and additional stables. The Factory House was used to store goods to be distributed to the various Indian tribes. The Council House, as its name indicates, was used for parleys with the Indians who came to St. Louis to see their "Red-Head Father." On October 11, 1818, Gen. Clark removed his family to the new home on the corner of Main and Vine Streets. The property in block 9, on Main, Pine and the River, was destroyed by fire November 18, 1825, leaving only the shops and the stone walls standing. At that time the buildings were occupied by Thornton Grimsley and Joseph White.

Gen. Clark was the Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1822 until his death September 1, 1838. He was appointed in 1807 Brigadier General of the Militia of the Territory of Upper Louisiana and in 1815, President Madison made him Governor of Missouri Territory, succeeding Benjamin Howard.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> St. Louis Archives; Clark Collection, ms.; *Missouri Republican*, November 21, 1825.



## CHARLES GRATIOT

To the west of Silvestre Labbadie, and on the northwest corner of Chestnut and Main Streets in city block 32, is shown the property of Charles Gratiot. He obtained it in 1796 from Joseph M. Papin. This property fronted one hundred and twenty feet on Main Street by three hundred feet toward the west, and contained a stone house built in 1785 by Papin. The house was sixty by forty feet and was twenty-one feet high. The kitchen in a separate building to the rear was twenty-seven by twenty-one feet, built of stone, with floor and ceiling. There was also a court-yard and garden, as well as a barn. The house was a very pretentious one, having seven rooms and basement, with a wide gallery in front. A stone store building was built to the north by Gratiot in 1797. The purchase price of the ground and houses was fifteen thousand *livres*, about three thousand dollars in United States money.

Mr. Gratiot's house was the center of hospitality. He entertained many notable persons, among them Captain Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and Thomas H. Benton. The latter in writing to a friend informing him of the death of Gratiot in 1817, stated: "He was my first friend here and I stayed six weeks under his roof."

In 1798 Mr. Gratiot had obtained from Governor-General Manuel Gayoso at New Orleans a concession for his "league square," some five or so miles west of the village on the waters of the River des Peres, of which he had become the possessor some years previous. He made extensive improvements on this tract of land, consisting of a house, orchard, garden. There was on it a considerable mine of stone coal, a saline and mill sites. In 1796 he wrote a business acquaintance that he had ten slaves working on this farm, who abundantly supplied provisions for his family.

Gratiot was born in Lausanne, Switzerland, April 20, 1752, son of David and Marie (Bernard) Gratiot. After receiving some schooling Lausanne, at seventeen years of age, he was sent to his mother's brother in London, who in turn sent him to a brother in Montreal, Canada, who was engaged in the fur trade. He arrived in that city in May, 1769, and remained in the employ of his uncle for six years. In 1777 he associated

himself with David McCrae and Company, as a partner, and went west. In December of that year he opened a store at Cahokia, while his partners established themselves at Kaskaskia. Here he became acquainted with George Rogers Clark, and a strong friendship began. He rendered Clark and the American cause much assistance. In 1781 he removed to St. Louis and on June 26, of that year married Victoire, daughter of Madame Marie Therese Bourgeois Chouteau. In the meantime his business prospered and he extended his trade connections to New Orleans, to the East and to Europe. On one of his journeys to New York he met John Jacob Astor and made a connection with him which continued until his death. In addition to his fur trade activities he operated a distillery, a tannery, salt works, and dealt extensively in real estate.

Mr. Gratiot signed the documents of the transfer of Upper Louisiana, as a witness, with Amos Stoddard, Governor Carlos Dehault DeLassus, Meriwether Lewis, and Antoine Soulard. While Gratiot was not the wealthiest of the St. Louis traders, he was one of the most widely known. He died at St. Louis, April 20, 1817. Mr. Gratiot's perfect knowledge of the English language brought to him all strangers visiting St. Louis, either on business or pleasure. He served as interpreter for George Rogers Clark in his conferences with Governor De Leyba, and during the proceedings at the transfer of Upper Louisiana at St. Louis. Gratiot supplied some goods for the Lewis and Clark expedition, and sent to President Jefferson cuttings or slips of the Missouri Osage plum and apple trees. He accompanied Capt. Lewis to St. Charles, when the latter went there to meet Capt. Clark and the remainder of the party who had left the encampment at Wood River, Illinois, to begin their memorable journey.

After the organization of the District of St. Louis, Gratiot was appointed first presiding judge of the Court of Quarter Sessions, and upon the incorporation of the town was elected a trustee. He also filled other public offices. His son, Charles, was one of the four French youths appointed by Jefferson to West Point immediately after the transfer. He graduated as an engineer. In 1819-29 planned and erected the defenses of

Hampton Roads, including Fortress Monroe. Besides his son, Charles, Gratiot had nine other children.<sup>14</sup>

### McKNIGHT AND BRADY

On the next block to the north of Charles Gratiot's property may be seen in the picture the buildings of McKnight and Brady. In 1810 they purchased this property from Alexander McNair and Edward Hempstead. The lot comprised sixty feet front on Main Street at the southwest corner of Pine, on which some distance back from the street stood an old stone house of the early French days. In this building they kept their store from the time of their arrival in St. Louis. On the front part of this lot, fronting on Main Street, they built the seventh brick building in St. Louis. It was a large one, covering the entire front, divided into two stores, with a hall in the center and a flight of stairs leading up to the second story and attic above. It was designed for a hotel and the upper portion of the building was opened for that purpose by Timothy Kibby in the fall of 1816, who called it the Washington Hall. In this house the first observance in St. Louis of the birthday of George Washington took place, February 22, 1817; a dinner was given at which Gen. Clark presided. The large dining room on the second floor was the principal ball-room for some years.

The firm of McKnight and Brady, successful merchants for many years, was composed of John McKnight and Thomas Brady. They came to St. Louis with a stock of merchandise loaded on a keel boat, from Pittsburg, in 1809. In 1814 the firm sold out their goods and entered into new business arrangements, but continued under the same name. They built up the largest mercantile business in St. Louis. They acquired a large amount of land in Missouri and Illinois, and the towns of Harrisonville and East St. Louis, Illinois, were built on land which belonged to them.

John McKnight was born in Augusta County, Virginia. He came to St. Louis with Thomas Brady, with whom he had previously formed a mercantile partnership. Robert Mc-

<sup>14</sup> Billon's Notes; Charles Gratiot, Sr. Letter book, ms. Thomas H. Benton Collection, mss.; Old Cathedral Marriages.



Knight, his brother, was a member of the Baird, Chambers and McKnight party that went to Santa Fe in 1812 on a trading expedition. Upon reaching Santa Fe their goods were confiscated, and they and the remaining eight of their party were taken to Chihuahua and thrown into prison. These were kept in confinement for ten years. In 1821 John McKnight joined with ten others to rescue these prisoners in Mexico. It was a trading expedition, but John McKnight's chief reason for going was to procure his brother's release from prison and bring him back to the States. After Robert McKnight was released the party returned to St. Louis, and the next year with another outfit they started off on a trading venture among the Comanche Indians. Soon after erecting their fort, and before trading began, John McKnight was killed by a war party of this tribe.<sup>15</sup>

Thomas Brady, an Irishman, married at Ste. Genevieve, Miss Harriet Jones, daughter of Hon. John Rice Jones. Thomas Brady died at his country residence about four miles north of St. Louis, October 11, 1821. He left a widow and three young daughters. Three years later his widow married Hon. John Scott of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri's first representative in Congress.<sup>16</sup>

#### FORT SAN CARLOS

To the rear of the picture, slightly left of the center, may be seen the stone tower which formed the principal fortification of the village of St. Louis. It was known as Fort San Carlos, and was part of the system of stockade started in 1780, in anticipation of the British and Indian attack on the village made on May 25th of that year. The location of the Tower was in the present Walnut Street, just west of Fourth, in a square, bounded by Fourth and Fifth Streets.

Next to the Tower, and to the left, is the Barracks, and further to the left is probably the "new stone residence" of Rufus Easton, the first postmaster. He moved the postoffice to his residence at Third Street in 1810.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> St. Louis Archives; Thomas James, *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans* (Walter B. Douglas edition), 94.

<sup>16</sup> Frederic L. Billon, Sketch of Thomas Brady, ms.

<sup>17</sup> *Missouri Gazette*, November 12, 1810.

At the River's edge is a keel boat which was the principal type of craft used for river transportation in the Mississippi Valley at that time.

### SOME FRENCH HOUSES OF THE TIME

The early French houses were usually built only one story high, of posts set upright about three feet in the ground. They were surrounded by a gallery, which the owner roofed, if he could afford it. In some cases the logs were set upon a stone foundation, instead of the ground. Sometimes, instead of posts for the walls, they were simply used as frame work for panels, fortified in between by cross-ties, filled in with cat and clay (a paste of mud finely mixed with cut straw or Spanish moss). When this surface had dried, it was whitewashed until it took on a dazzling whiteness. The chimney filled in with the like material, was made of four long corner-posts, converging towards the top, so that the interior diameter of the chimney at the top was not more than half as great as the hearth.

These primitive houses were low in the ceiling, and the steep roof was covered with large shingles or clap-boards laid on poles, with a lap of three in four. When they had been carefully laid they were held in place by battens of poles stretched across them, the ends pinned down with wooden pegs to the corners and the frame. The interiors were of two to five rooms, or more, with generally a lean-to, or detached kitchen. The window frames, set with eight or ten inch glass, were hinged and swung like doors. Some of the windows had bolts, as Auguste Chouteau wrote to Charles Gratiot at Mackinac in 1793, to procure for him "bolts for twelve windows and two doors to fasten on the inside." When the chimney was erected in the middle of the house it was built of stone throughout. In the ruder cabins there were no floors, while in others the floors were made of slats or puncheons. In the more pretentious houses the floors were of nicely joined planks of walnut, which were kept well waxed and highly polished.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Scharf, *History of Saint Louis City and County*; Recollections of Anne Lucas Hunt; Autobiography of Dr. Robert Simpson, ms.



The following are a few descriptions of some early houses taken from the St. Louis Archives in the Society's possession:

A house on joist in a row, boarded top and bottom, roofed with shingles, with a cellar underneath and a stone chimney; consisting of one room, with openings for four windows and two doors; together with a barn about thirty-two feet in length by eighteen feet in width, roofed with straw.

A house eighteen feet square, of round posts in the ground, which will be planed and cut; the contractor to furnish all the wood for construction, with the exception of the boards for floor and ceiling; shingles for roof, lath and iron work, doors and windows; mud plastering and stone for chimney, the owner to furnish. The cost of this house was fifteen hundred livres in "actual money."

Many of the first settlers who came from the east side of the River, after the English occupation, had dismantled their houses and brought with them the doors, windows, planking, and in fact everything that could be removed.

In a contract between Francois Cotin and Jean Orteze, a master joiner, dated February 20, 1768, the latter agreed to build a house for Cotin, twenty-two feet in length by eighteen feet in width, of posts in the ground, for which building Cotin was to furnish about "one thousand shingles, twelve posts, thirty-two joist, besides all the hardware and nails for the doors and windows, and Orteze obligated himself to have the chimney made in stone and to furnish all the other wood, workmanship, hardware and nails, if any are lacking, in fact, everything in general that will be necessary to complete the house, key in hand, with the exception of the mud plastering, which Cotin will take charge of. The house to be delivered by Orteze to Cotin by the end of May, 1768."

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